



# I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU

BROWN, BLUE AND CITRUS ARE THE MAGIC INGREDIENTS DESIGNER SUZIE PAGE USED TO LIVEN UP A SUBURBAN TRACT HOUSE

By KK Young • Photography by Ryann Ford

And, guess what? We walked out of there with a dog reserved just for us.

Another piece of advice: Don't agree to let your child pick out your new dog. Our daughter picked one that had been there two months. There were obvious reasons the dog was at the shelter that long, but we ignored them. However, this dog loved to play tug-o-war, and my daughter was smitten. And I fell in love with the idea of saving the poor thing. My wife? Not so happy with any of it. In retrospect, my daughter and I really steamrolled her in the entire process. We had an agreement going in that all three of us had to agree on the dog we would select. But when an eight-year-old starts crying, it gets to you.

The next day we returned to get our 45-pound blond shepherd-beagle mix. We named her Roxy. She was a mutt that was pretty unruly but really good at one thing ... shedding. Because she's a short-haired dog and also because I tend to not think things through, the talent for shedding was not on my radar. She was also quite accomplished at licking her privates, but I guess in the shelter there is not much else to do.

The upside of adopting a dog that has been in the pokey for more than two months is they are not very needy and, for all practical purposes, they are crate trained. Now it's a done deal: the dog is ours and shedding as often as most of us text and drive. If I were guessing, I'd say she had to have lost ten pounds the first week we had her just by shedding hair. I know because I can see it everywhere. The floor upstairs in our home is charcoal slate tile, and the downstairs floor is dark stained concrete. Everywhere you look, every single day, you see Roxy hair on everything. Our house was always spotless, but not anymore. In an effort to calm the gathering storm, my daughter agreed to brush the dog every night, and I agreed to sweep every day. I also started giving Roxy a bath at least every other day.

I know this is a long way to my main nugget of wisdom, but here you go: **GET A DOG IN A COLOR THAT MATCHES YOUR HOUSE.** I assure you, that will save you a lot of grief. Rarely are all members of the family on the same page. That is why television shows like *Survivor* and *Big Brother* are so popular. There's always one person who is in total opposition.

But, back to the Hager family, and fast-forward two and a half months. The dog is not shedding nearly as much. We have purchased beige blankets and comforters that match her hair, and the dog has migrated from the crate to sleeping with our daughter. Roxy has calmed down and spends most of her indoor time on her living room dog bed, which at least means we've contained her shedding to a smaller area. And she has even lost interest in her private parts. Life is good again.

Footnote: I could have added a hundred more anecdotes about how chaotic the past few months have been, but I could also add another hundred about how fun it's been. We found a lovable dog that has been a great addition to our family. I would encourage you to adopt your next dog. Living in Austin and not having a dog is like living in Dallas and not having credit card debt. Austin is a dog town. It's who we are and why we like being Austinites.

*J.B. Hager can be heard on Mix 94.7 FM weekdays from 6 to 10 a.m. The show is simulcast on Channel 42 til 7 a.m.*



Photo by Eric Swanson

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Designer Suzie Page upholstered the backs of some of the antique French chairs with black and white ticking; others were covered in an exotic black and white silk pattern.

J

anie Fleming has great taste, which can be dangerous when you're shopping for a stylish house on a budget. But her haute outlook is tempered with a pragmatist's sense for getting a lot of bang for the buck. So, when Fleming set

out on a twilight stroll with a friend in a South Austin neighborhood and noticed a red-brick Georgian house for sale, she wanted to know more. Specifically: Was the interior just as grand as the exterior? After viewing the two-story house the next day, Fleming discovered that the answer to her question was "No." With an entry dominated by an in-your-face stairway enclosed by walls, small public rooms with eight-foot-high ceilings and outdated light fixtures, the house didn't exactly measure up. "It looked like a troll's house," Fleming recalls with a laugh.

Actually, it looked like a house that belonged to a very bland troll. The downstairs was painted an uninspired neutral hue; upstairs, the dull theme continued into the four bedrooms and two baths. In spite of its cosmetic drawbacks, though, the house was perfect for Fleming and her two daughters. "I'd been searching for the right house for two years," says Fleming. "As soon as I saw this one, I knew it was mine." She was already mentally prepared to remodel, and a fateful trip to designer Suzie Page's store TwentyThree07 had inspired her. "I really wanted to like my house," says Fleming, "and I was smart enough to know that I'm not a decorator." So, she



Benjamin Moore's lacquered "Classic Navy" gives this living room brilliance; klismos-style chairs are covered in white linen and carry out the colors in the ceramics collection.





In the breakfast nook, banquette seating upholstered in a fresh yellow and white cotton Duralee geometric print looks pretty but is durable too and can withstand lots of abuse.

hired Page to help transform the boring house with good bones into a stunner.

Page had already spied a clue to Fleming's style. "Janie has an extensive collection of blue and white ceramics," says Page, "so I knew we'd want to cross-pollinate that combination from room to room." Page could easily have taken the predictable approach and used light neutral hues for walls, furniture and upholstery to disguise the obvious fact that space was tight. But in a counterintuitive move, the designer opted for another strategy. Page decided to employ bold color selectively throughout the house. Instead of capitulating to the agenda of the dwelling's suburban layout (small dining room to the left of the foyer, small living room to the right, kitchen and breakfast area in the back), Page and Fleming decided to ignore it,

The iron and concrete island is custom through Twenty Three 07, light bulb chandelier is by Reost. Antique chairs clustered around an antique table set the stage for casual dining.



relying on color to give the house the personality it so richly deserved.

To free up the tight layout and other design flaws, the pair worked with contractor Richard Stuart and architect Chuck Krueger, who prescribed taking the Georgian down to its studs. The goal was to improve the flow of the house. The architect advised raising the ceilings an extra foot and expanding openings between rooms. Contractor Stuart knocked down walls on either side of the banister to create an airy foyer. “We opened up a lot of walls and that expanded the existing spaces,” Stuart explains. “We didn’t add square footage, but those subtle changes of moving doors around and widening entryways made all the difference.”

The kitchen received benefit from new cabinets, countertops and a sleek concrete island. A powder room, which blocked the view from kitchen into fam-

## "AS SOON AS I SAW THIS HOUSE," SAYS FLEMING, "I KNEW IT WAS MINE."

ily room, was relocated next to the laundry room just off the breakfast nook. Upstairs, a reconfigured master suite incorporated one of the bedrooms as a new walk-in closet. Even the exterior architecture got a face-lift, with high-quality wood-framed windows replacing their run-of-the-mill predecessors.

With logistical challenges resolved, Page and Fleming got out the paint samples. The living room—now recast as a study—was where Fleming decided to showcase her blue and white porcelain jars, vases and bowls. Page suggested a backdrop of the deepest shade of blue for the room, which is fronted by floor-to-ceiling windows. “I must have tried 15 shades of blue before I found the right one,” she explains. “I really wanted the light streaming in from the front windows to play off of it.” Just in case the color wasn’t dramatic enough, Page opted for the high-gloss lacquer version, which enriches the room with a gleaming shimmer. Citrus pillows on the sofa and





Suzie Page gutted the kitchen, replacing worn-out cabinets with sleek ones that sport minimalist hardware; Subway tile is an unexpected pairing with Carrara marble countertops.





The Fortuny pendant casts subtle light on the wallpaper (Brunschwig & Ellis' "Le Grand Palais"); crema marfil marble counters and octagonal Home Depot tile complete the look.



A Fortuny chandelier and Murano glass lamps add instant glamour to the master bedroom, where Janie Fleming's collection of seashell prints hangs over the rattan bed.



chairs are a sassy contrast, a reference to the citrus color Page used to upholster the breakfast room's banquette.

Because Fleming's former residence was much larger than her new one, her furniture collection needed to be coordinated and pared down. "We edited, edited, edited," says Page. "[Fleming] knew she wanted a gracious look that didn't require quite so many furnishings." In the cozy dining room, for example, Page took a whimsical, yet practical, approach with her choices for the dining room chairs' upholstery: The seats are covered in a durable white Sunbrella fabric, while the chair backs alternate between a black and white striped ticking by Ralph Lauren and charcoal-black-cut velvet damask by Koplavitch and Zimmer. Paired with creamy silk drapes, Page says, the effect is "dramatic without being overwhelming." Upstairs, Fleming's bedroom includes dark, rich brown accents that "give the feel of a glamorous hotel."

Fleming didn't stray far from the style of her previous residence. Both homes, she says, are layered with an antique-meets-modern vibe. An overscaled Italian lantern creates an aesthetic paradox in the dining room, and sleek octagonal tile in the upstairs bathrooms "blends the old with the new," says Page. Against a backdrop of classic yellow oak floors, crown molding and traditional architectural lines, Fleming's art collection (which boasts Betty Gold prints and several European finds) pops. The harmony between the structure and interior, Fleming says, is indicative of her journey—both architecturally and personally. "Everything about this house is me. Creating this house satisfied my inner boho, and my daughters and I are looking forward to the patina and memories that will come with time." **amh**

